



COMPONENTS FAQ

Q My PC has an SLI motherboard and I'm thinking of adding a second graphics card soon. What kind of power supply do I need?

A NVidia recommends that you have at least a 450W power supply for an SLI system, as the cards are quite power hungry. As both cards will need PCI Express (PCI-E) power connectors, you must make sure that you have the correct adaptors.

If your power supply doesn't have enough power, you'll need to replace it. The easiest and best way to do this is to buy a new SLI-certified power supply. These come with dual PCI-E connectors, so you can connect them to two graphics cards without having to use Molex (traditional four-pin power connectors) to PCI-E converters.

The second advantage with an SLI-certified power supply is that nVidia has put it through a rigorous set of tests to ensure that it outputs enough power under load. It's a kind of guarantee of quality.

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▲ If you install a second graphics card you may need a power converter such as this

REVIEW MULTIMEDIA CASE

SILVERSTONE LC16M

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £188 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.scan.co.uk

DETAILS www.scl-ltd.co.uk

Building a media centre involves more than just slapping the right bits into a spare case and plonking it in your living room. You'll want a stylish case that doesn't look out of place, too.

They don't come much better-looking than SilverStone's LC16M, which is available in black and silver. The neat aluminium front panel gives the case a hi-fi feel, helped by its LCD screen and media control buttons. The LC16M comes with a remote control, which communicates with the built-in IR receiver.

These extras are all part of an iMon VFD kit. You can buy this for your existing PC (we'll show you how to fit it in next month's *PC Builder* section), but SilverStone has done a much neater job of integrating it.

Once you've installed the software in Windows, you're provided with media centre software, which you can use to watch videos, view photos and play music. The LCD screen on the front of the case can display track information, a graphic equaliser, video information and a lot of other things, all selectable using the Function jog wheel. You can also program the media buttons on the front to act as they would on a hi-fi.

Installation can be a bit tricky. While SilverStone provides all the screws and cables that you need, the installation guide isn't very detailed. This is a bit of a problem, as connecting the screen, buttons and front-mounted USB2, FireWire and audio ports means connecting a rat's nest of cables to your motherboard. Even experienced PC builders



will find it fairly difficult, and you'll also need a motherboard with a lot of free USB headers to connect everything.

There's plenty of room inside the case – it's the size of a tower on its side – including room for a standard ATX motherboard, six hard disk bays and an optical bay with its own aluminium drive flap. There's no power supply, and we'd recommend looking for a silent one so that your PC doesn't make too much noise when it's on all the time.

SilverStone provides two silent 80mm case fans at the back, which help airflow in the case and should keep your processor's fan speed to a minimum by helping the air circulate, making your PC as quiet as possible.

It's an attractive case, with a high build quality that will look great in any living room. However, the mess of cables inside and poor installation instructions mean that it's suitable only for people who are comfortable building PCs.

David Ludlow

✓ Looks great; lots of room inside the case; comes with a remote and software

✗ Difficult to install; user guide could be better

SPECIFICATIONS ATX case, iMon VFD (remote and LCD screen), two USB2, one FireWire, two audio, one 5¼" drive bay, one external 3½" drive bay, six internal 3½" drive bays. **Part code** LC16M

HOTLIST PROCESSOR

AMD Athlon 64 3200+

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £98 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.savastore.com

DETAILS www.amd.com

AMD's Athlon 64 3200+ is a powerful and relatively cheap processor, and did well in all our benchmarks. It should appeal to overclockers, too, because AMD processors are easy to tweak. The Athlon 64 3200+ is also an excellent choice for games and should help your PC muster a few more frames per second.

SPECIFICATIONS 2GHz processor, Socket 939, 200MHz external bus, two 1,000MHz HyperTransport, 128KB L2 cache, 512KB L1 cache. **Part code** ADA3200BPBOX



PRICE
CUT

HOTLIST PROCESSOR

INTEL Pentium 4 640

RATING ★★★★★

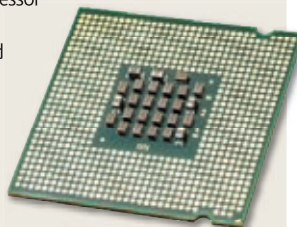
PRICE £141 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.savastore.com

DETAILS www.intel.com

Intel's 640 processor supports 64-bit instructions and has a massive 2MB of L1 cache. The Pentium 4 640 is a high-performance chip that provides enough power to cope with any application. It did well in our benchmarks and is good value, too.

SPECIFICATIONS 3.26GHz processor, LGA775, 800MHz external bus, 16KB L2 cache, 2,048KB L1 cache. **Part code** BX80547PG3200F



PRICE
CUT

HOTLIST PROCESSOR

INTEL Celeron D 346

RATING ★★★★★

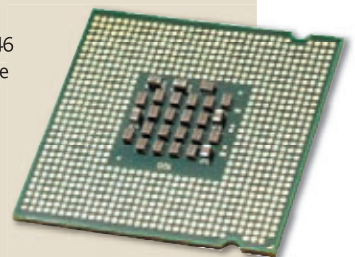
PRICE £77 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.dabs.com

DETAILS www.intel.com

Intel's Celeron D 346 might be part of the company's budget range, but it's still a good performer. It supports 64-bit instructions, which will be useful when more 64-bit applications are available. It does well with current software, too. It's a powerful budget processor with enough processing power for video editing.

SPECIFICATIONS 3.06GHz processor, LGA775, 533MHz external bus, 16KB L2 cache, 256KB L1 cache. **Part code** BX80547RE3066CN



REVIEW SILENT PC CASE

ANTEC P150

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £100 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.morecomputers.com
DETAILS www.antec.com

Silent PCs aren't just for the living room; a quiet computer can make an office or bedroom a much nicer place to be. Antec's P150 is a good starting point for building a whisper-quiet system.

The iPod-white finish looks great and hides a sturdy steel structure, so the case won't rattle even with lots of moving components inside. Antec has fitted a 120mm fan to the rear of the case for cooling. Its large size means that it shifts a lot of air



even when spinning slowly. It also comes with a speed adjust switch, so you can get it running at a comfortable volume.

Hard disks can often create a lot of noise, as vibrations caused by the drive spinning can be transmitted into the case through the holding screws. The P150's hard disk mounting trays have rubber grommets to prevent

this. If you want absolute silence, you can ditch the drive trays and use the rubber-band suspension mounts (a bit like a hard disk sling) instead, so that no vibration makes it to the case at all.

Antec ships the P150 with one of its Neo HE 430W power supplies. It's a very quiet supply and should have enough power for all but high-end SLI

systems. It's also modular, so you only have to fit the power cables that you will use.

Building your PC is a little tricky, as getting to the drive bays requires removing the front bezel and the twin 90mm fan mounts. Once that's done, though, there's a lot of room and you shouldn't have too much trouble installing your drives and components.

Intelligently designed to keep your PC quiet and with a built-in power supply, the P150 is an excellent case and very good value.

David Ludlow

✓ **Attractive; quiet; comes with a modular power supply**

✗ **Tricky to get to drive bays**

SPECIFICATIONS ATX case, 120mm fan, two USB2, one FireWire, two audio, two 5¼" drive bays, one external 3½" drive bay, four internal 3½" drive bays (three if you use suspension bands). **Part code** 0761345-09151-0

REVIEW MIDI TOWER CASE

FOXCONN TP-544

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £45 inc VAT

SUPPLIER sales.uk@foxconn.com
DETAILS www.foxconnchannel.com

Building a PC can be frustrating, but Foxconn hopes to make it easier with the TP-544 case. The screwless design and pre-fitted power supply mean you won't need a screwdriver, although the manual strangely tells you that you need a Phillips head screwdriver.

The case looks smart, although it might be a bit bland for some people's tastes. It does a good



job of hiding your optical drives behind its own doors, though. There are also front-mounted USB and FireWire ports, which connect to spare headers on your motherboard.

Getting into the case couldn't be easier: you just remove the thumbscrews and slide the side panel off. Once inside, it's the easiest PC we've ever built. The motherboard plate unclips from the case, and all

you have to do is drop your board on to the spikes. It took a bit of effort to get the motherboard plate back in place, though.

Drives slide into spare bays and you slide the mounting clips forward to lock them in. Finally, you simply connect the cables and LEDs to the

motherboard and plug in the power supply. This is the weakest part of the package, as the 350W power supply has only one SATA power connector and Foxconn doesn't provide extras in the box.

It's fairly quiet and will suit most PCs, but if you want to build an SLI system you'll have to upgrade it (see *Upgrade Workshop*, *Shopper* February 2006). Still, while it might not be the most exciting case to look at, it's incredibly simple to build.

David Ludlow

✓ **Easy to build; lots of free drive bays**

✗ **Power supply has only one SATA connector; not the most attractive case**

SPECIFICATIONS ATX case, four 5¼" drive bays, six 3½" drive bays, four USB2 ports, one FireWire port, 350W power supply, 120mm cooling fan. **Part code** TP-544

HOTLIST GRAPHICS CARD

GIGABYTE GeForce 7800 GT

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £260 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.dabs.com
DETAILS www.gigabyte.com.tw


The 7800 GT might be the baby of nVidia's new graphics card range, but it's far from being a weak performer. In fact, with scores of 14,601 in 3DMark03 and an impressive 86.5fps in Doom 3 at a resolution of 1,600x1,200 it is an excellent card.

Available for £100 less than the 7800 GTX, but only a few per cent slower, Gigabyte's 7800 GT is the performance card to buy.



SPECIFICATIONS GeForce 7800 GT, 400MHz core, 256MB GDDR3 (16Hz effective), 20 pixel-pipelines, PCI-E x16 interface. **Part code** GV-NX78T256V-B

HOTLIST POWER SUPPLY

ENERMAX Liberty ELT500AWT

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £75 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.candccentral.co.uk
DETAILS www.enermax.co.uk

Enermax's Liberty ELT500AWT is a modular 500W SLI-certified power supply. While it has enough power for a PC stuffed full of components and drives, you have to fit only the power cables you need. It's well priced, comes with a carry bag for your spare cables and is silent in operation.



SPECIFICATIONS 500W modular power supply, five modular ports, two PCI-E, six Molex, four SATA. **Part code** 0761345-05506-2

HOTLIST MOTHERBOARD

ECS KN1 SLI Extreme

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £77 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.pcnextday.co.uk
DETAILS www.ecs.uk.com


ECS's KN1 SLI Extreme motherboard uses nVidia's nForce 4 SLI chipset, so you can use two graphics cards together. It also supports all Socket 939 Athlon 64 processors – ideal as the basis of a powerful computer.

Performance is excellent, and the motherboard has every port you could possibly want. For the price, this is excellent value.



SPECIFICATIONS nForce 4 SLI chipset, supports AMD Socket 939 processors, three PCI, one PCI-E x16, one PCI-E x1, four DIMM slots, two Gigabit Ethernet, ECS Top Hat Flash, three IDE, six SATA2, four USB2, FireWire. **Part code** KN1 SLI